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Farm Broadcasters Letter

United States Department of Agriculture Office of Public Affairs Radio-TV Division Washington, D.C. 20250 (202) 720-4330

Letter No. 2576

September 18, 1992

FOOD ASSISTANCE TO RUSSIA -- A \$1.15 billion credit guarantee and food assistance package has been announced by Secretary of Agriculture Edward Madigan. Credit guarantees constitute \$900 million, and \$250 million in food assistance will be made available starting October 1. "This assistance package will support more than 30,000 export-related jobs in the United States and nearly \$3 billion in total economic activity," Madigan said. "These measures will assure that U.S. agricultural exports to one of our largest markets continue at a normal pace," Madigan said, "even as Russia continues its dramatic economic restructuring." **Contact: Roger Runningen (202) 720-4623.**

CRP UP, SET ASIDE DOWN -- An additional one million acres were idled in 1992 under the Conservation Reserve Program. Land set aside under annual programs declined 12 million acres, reflecting lower set-aside requirements for most program crops and new planting flexibility provisions. About 53.7 million acres were idled under Federal programs this year, down about 24 million acres from the peak of 78 million in 1988. The Conservation Reserve Program, now in its seventh year, has converted 35.4 million cropland acres to conservation uses. **Contact: Merritt Padgitt (202) 219-0433.**

NEW ADVANTAGES -- A virus-resistant squash has been produced that resists two diseases that affect squash, watermelon mosaic virus 2 and zucchini yellow mosaic virus. The ZW-20 squash was genetically engineered to resist the diseases. USDA's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service has reviewed information from numerous field tests submitted by the company that produced the squash and is proposing to rule that there is no reason to regulate the squash any longer. APHIS has the responsibility to assure that no plant pest is introduced or disseminated in releasing a bio-engineered plant. **Contact: Sharon Scheidhauer (301) 436-8297.**

CITY GROWTH AND FARMLAND -- A study by USDA's Economic Research Service shows that rapid population growth does not appear to threaten U.S. agriculture. The rate of farmland conversion to urban uses has not increased substantially over the past two decades, and the total land in crops has remained almost constant since 1945. Rural tracts of range and woodlands, however, have declined substantially. Thus there is a need for farmland protection to help conserve local resources, protect the environment, and sustain the rural way of life. **Contact: Marlow Vesterby (202) 219-0422.**

AMERICANS ARE EATING THEIR VEGGIES -- Growth in consumer spending for fruit and vegetables has been exceeded only by spending for poultry, \$102 billion in 1990 compared with \$155 billion for all kinds of meat. On a per capita basis, U.S. consumers used 90 pounds of fresh vegetables, up from 70 pounds in 1970. The increased consumption is attributed to rising health concerns and an understanding of the nutritional advantages offered by vegetables. **Contact: Gary Lucier (202) 219-0884.**

SUCCESSFUL TRADE EXPERIMENT -- USDA recently allowed exporters to sell wheat under a barter arrangement with third-country buyers. Under the arrangement third-country purchasers of goods exported from the former Soviet Union acted as buyers of goods desired for import there. "It has worked well so we're expanding it to include all commodities the former Soviet Union is eligible for under the Export Enhancement Program, the Dairy Export Incentive Program and the Sunflower Oil Assistant Program," said deputy secretary of agriculture Ann Veneman. The arrangement recognizes the reality of the trading situation in the former Soviet Union does not fit the traditional structure of United States export programs, and that buyers are increasingly relying on compensatory forms of trade such as barter. **Contact: Roger Runnigen (202) 720-4623.**

CUTTING FOOD COSTS -- Getting a healthy diet for the least amount of money is a major concern. Food costs can be reduced by combining starchy foods such as pasta, rice or potatoes with red meat, fish, poultry, beans or peas. Baked potatoes topped with a little cheese and vegetables can make a meal in itself. Substituting your labor for the convenience of factory-prepared items can also cut costs. "As a general rule," says Sue Butkus, Washington State University Cooperative Extension nutrition specialist, "frozen dinners with meat cooked in them are very expensive. Fancy vegetables are the next most expensive convenience foods compared to preparing the foods in your kitchen." **Contact: Sue Butkus (206) 840-4553.**

MAKING THE DAM TOUGH -- It's a common sight this year in wet sections of the nation to see ponds overflowing a dam and endangering its structure. A study by USDA's Agricultural Research Service shows that dams and levees will stay intact a lot longer if the soil is properly moistened and compacted during construction. Resistance to overtop erosion was five times greater using the procedure of moistening and compacting the soil. Forceful compaction of the soil improves resistance to overtop erosion. **Contact: Gregory Hanson (405) 624-4135.**

THE HIRED HAND -- Nearly half of all U.S. farms use hired labor. Agricultural employers need to understand Federal laws and regulations governing employment, taxes, wages, and working conditions. USDA's Economic Research Service has produced a single-source publication that summarizes these laws and regulations. "A Summary of Federal Laws and Regulations Affecting Agricultural Employers, 1992" is available for \$8.00 a copy. Order by phone toll free by dialing 1-800-999-6779 and asking for the publication by its title. **Contact: Jack Runyan (202) 219-0932.**

FEWER HIRED WORKERS -- There were 558,000 hired workers on farms and ranches in eleven surveyed states during the week of August 9-14, 1992. This compares with 658,000 workers during the August 1991 survey week. Average August wage rates received by hired workers ranged from \$4.95 per hour in Texas, to \$6.97 per hour in Washington state. Wages were higher when compared to last year except in Michigan and Texas. **Contact: Tom Kurtz (202) 690-3228.**

*R-TV Fax: (202) 690-2165
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FROM OUR RADIO SERVICE

AGRICULTURE USA # 1841 -- Popular consumer items such as ice cream and french fries are earning big dollars for U.S. exporters. On this edition **Doug Wakefield** reports on the "Unsung Heroes of Exports." (Weekly reel -- 13-1/2 minute documentary.)

CONSUMER TIME # 1323 -- Childhood nutrition training; pass the ketchup, please!; microwave love affair; financial planning; living with yellowjackets. (Weekly reel of 2-1/2 to 3 minute consumer features.)

AGRITAPE NEWS & FEATURES #1832 -- Farm income outlook; irrigation and groundwater contamination; improving striped bass production; selling mesquite honey and bee pollen. (Weekly reel of news features.)

NEWS FEATURE FIVE #1538 -- Isotopes in the body; isotopic plants; teenage nutrition; protein & the RDA; cholestrol & the infant. (Weekly reel of research feature stories.)

UPCOMING ON USDA RADIO NEWSLINE -- Tues., Sept. 29, ag prices, crop/weather update; Wed. Sept. 30, world livestock situation, grain stocks; Thur., Oct. 1, horticultural exports, trout production; Tues., Oct. 6, crop/weather update. These are the **USDA** reports we know about in advance. Our Newsline carries many stories every day which are not listed in this lineup. Please don't let the lack of a story listing keep you from calling.

DIAL THE USDA RADIO NEWSLINE (202) 488-8358 or 8359.

Material changed at 5 p.m., EDT, each working day.

FROM OUR TELEVISION NEWS SERVICE

FEATURES -- **Patrick O'Leary** reports on USDA's Fall Color Hotline; **John Snyder** reports on the farm-raised shrimp industry.

ACTUALITIES -- USDA meteorologist **Bob Stefanski** updates U.S. crop and weather conditions; USDA economist **Bob Dubman** on farm income and finance; USDA general sales manager **Chris Goldthwait** on the new USDA aid package to Russia; and USDA economist **Ed Allen** on wheat production.

UPCOMING FEATURES -- **Pat O'Leary** reports on a unique USDA conservation team in Delaware; **Lynn Wyvill** reports on the experimental crop, Annual Medics; and **DeBoria Janifer** reports on computerized sow feeding research.

EVERY OTHER WEEK -- **Agriculture Update**, five minutes of USDA farm program information in "news desk" format with B-roll.

Available on Satellite Galaxy 6, channel 23, audio 6.2 or 6.8, downlink frequency 4160 MHz.: Thursdays from 7:30 - 7:45 p.m., EDT, Saturdays from 10 - 10:30 a.m., EDT, and Mondays from 8 - 8:30 a.m., EDT.

OFFMIKE

EARLY FROST...is a possibility that has producers concerned in the area served by **Al Heinz** (KGLO, Mason City, IA). Al says the soybean pods are filling and sunshine is needed, but weather patterns keep bringing in cool wet conditions, and record low temperatures have entered the region in early September. Combines usually don't get into the field until early October, Al says, leaving lots of time for weather mischief.

WINTER WHEAT PLANTING...is underway in Oklahoma, says **Ron Hays** (Oklahoma Agrinet, Oklahoma City, OK). Ron says there has been little time between the late harvest of spring wheat and planting this month, giving short turnaround for ground preparation. Soil moisture is very good and should help give the crop a good start.

TWO-STATE MILK ORDER...is being worked on by producers in Oregon and Washington. **Lee Mielke** (KLYN, Lynden, WA) says it's at the committee discussion stage, and could be ready for voting this December. Lee will be covering the World Dairy Expo, Sept. 30 - Oct. 4 in Madison, WI.

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HARVEST AND FREEZE DATES...are overlapping, says **David Imrie** (CKCO-TV/CFCA, Kitchener, Ontario, Canada). Some of the corn crop is too far behind schedule to harvest for grain, and will be used for silage. Dave says the quantity of feed this winter should be sufficient for Canadian producers, but quality is expected to be down.

GRAIN DRYERS...are high on the wanted list, says **Al Gustin** (KFYR, Bismarck, ND). Wheat crop has been harvested wet, and producers are trying to dry it mechanically.

SERIOUS SITUATION...faces the sugar industry in Louisiana, says **Regnal Wallace** (Louisiana Radio Network, Baton Rouge, LA). He says that the two previous crop years were disappointing due to the 1989 freeze. Producers needed a good crop this year, and had one in the ground until Hurricane Andrew hit. The storm also damaged the industry's mills and warehouses. Reg says its going to be tough on the sugar producer with thin pockets.


VIC POWELL

Chief, Radio and TV Division